

VZCZCXRO4980  
OO RUEHGI RUEHMA RUEHROV RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHKH #0697/01 1481435  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 281435Z MAY 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3874  
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE  
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000697

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A/S CARSON, AF/C  
NSC FOR MGAVIN  
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: CODEL ISAKSON VISIT TO EL FASHER, DARFUR, MAY 24, 2009

REF: A) KHARTOUM 693  
B) KHARTOUM 507  
C) KHARTOUM 684

11. (SBU) Summary: Senator Johnny Isakson, Senator Bob Corker, Mrs. Dianne Isakson, CDA a.i. Mark Asquino and accompanying emboffs traveled to El Fasher, Darfur on May 24 to meet with internally-displaced persons (IDPs), humanitarian representatives and officials at UNAMID. Osman Kibir, the Wali (appointed-governor) of North Darfur, welcomed the delegation by saying, "It is very important for Sudanese-U.S. relations not to deteriorate." Visiting Abu Shouk IDP camp, the delegation spoke with residents who had been displaced by the conflict in 2003, but who claimed that security concerns kept them from returning home. At UNAMID, Joint Special Representative (JSR) Rodolphe Adada warned that the Chad-Sudan conflict risks becoming an international war. Additionally, the senators were told by UNAMID officials that they lack sufficient logistical and engineering components to attain UNAMID's desired presence on the ground in Darfur, and without a peace deal, UNAMID remains unable to fulfill its mandate. Two Fur IDP leaders pleaded with the delegation for increased international attention on Darfur, and Sudanese Liberation Army factional leader Minni Minnawi (SLA/MM) questioned whether or not the U.S. intends to maintain its focus on Darfur. End summary.

#### THE OFFICIAL LINE

-----

12. (SBU) Arriving at the office of the Wali of North Darfur in El Fasher on the morning of May 24, Osman Mohamed Kibir greeted the delegation with a display of Darfuri culture. Dancers and drummers from the Fur, Zaghawa, and assorted Arab tribes in traditional garb danced on the lawn of the Wali's office with local television cameras in tow. Seated in his conference room with various GOS representatives in North Darfur, Wali Kibir thanked the Senators for coming to Darfur, and frequently assured the assembled USG representatives that their presence was welcomed in Darfur. "We appreciate the role of American humanitarian agencies in Darfur. These agencies play an important role," he said, adding, "It is very important for U.S.-Sudanese relations not to deteriorate." On humanitarian issues, Kibir called the situation "stable," denying there were any health epidemics, and boasting that rates of maternal and infant mortality in the IDP camps was similar to that of urbanized areas in Darfur.

#### IDP CONCERNS

-----

13. (SBU) With a security escort provided by the UNAMID Indonesian Formed Police Unit, the delegation proceeded to Abu Shouk IDP camp, located in El Fasher and home to over 40,000 residents. At a makeshift community center whose thatched walls had blown over in high winds earlier in the day, a group of Fur Umdas (traditional

leaders) detailed the difficulties of living in the camp and the lack of choices for the future ahead. Displaced in 2004 from now-uninhabited areas northwest of El Fasher, the Umdas said that they would return to their home villages if security permitted, but neither the GOS nor UNAMID could provide sufficient security for them to feel safe enough to return. "We don't want to live in this camp," one Umda told them, and then added: "We want to go home." The delegation toured the camp, visiting camp clinics formerly run by international NGOs expelled from Sudan and now directed by Sudan's Ministry of Health. In addition, they saw the mud-walled home of a middle-aged widow who had lived in the camp for five years. Although pleased that her children were able to attend kindergarten in the camp, she said she had fled war in the countryside to find herself with no options at Abu Shouk IDP camp. When asked what she feared the most, she said "being caught up in warfare again."

¶4. (SBU) Concerned for their safety after the arrest of another prominent IDP leader in El Fasher the previous week, two Abu Shouk IDP leaders agreed to meet with the Codel in the privacy of a U.S. Embassy temporary staff residence in El Fasher. Abdalla Adam Basher, chairman of the Fur Shura Council in North Darfur, and Abulbasher Ali Uthman, the non-GOS-appointed Umda in Abu Shouk IDP camp, thanked the U.S. repeatedly for its assistance to Darfur, but reminded the gathering that key international initiatives in Darfur have yet to gain any significant traction among IDPs. On the security situation, Uthman said that IDPs would never return to their homes as long as they do not feel protected. He added that without any confidence in the power of UNAMID to provide security to go home, they would remain indefinitely in the camps.

MINNAWI

KHARTOUM 00000697 002 OF 002

-----

¶5. (SBU) Minni Minnawi, Senior Assistant to the President of Sudan and leader of the SLA/MM rebel faction, met briefly with the delegation to detail his dissatisfaction with the international community following the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement. Less critical of the GOS than in the past (ref C), Minnawi voiced concern that the U.S. would not retain its focus on Darfur due to the global financial meltdown and its increasing attention to implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Reassured by the delegation that the U.S. has acted swiftly to appoint a new Presidential Special Envoy to Sudan, and is currently actively participating and encouraging others to join Darfur peace talks in Doha, Minnawi thanked the delegation for its visit. He expressed hope that they would soon return to a peaceful and developed Darfur.

UNAMID

-----

¶6. (SBU) UNAMID JSR Rodolphe Adada, Deputy JSR Henry Anyidoho and UNAMID Force Commander Martin Luther Agwai all thanked the delegation for continued U.S. assistance during a briefing at UNAMID on the afternoon of May 24. The delegation was told that UNAMID currently stands at 68 percent of full deployment, and senior UNAMID representatives agreed that the hands-on involvement of the U.S. through the Friends of UNAMID has assisted in improving its peacekeeping presence in Darfur. UNAMID's prognosis of the situation in Darfur remains pessimistic, as DJSR Anyidoho warned, "There is a very high risk of a proxy war (between Sudan and Chad) escalating to an international war." Anyidoho estimated that a ceasefire would solve half of Darfur's problems, and JSR Adada seconded his analysis, adding, "We do not have a peace agreement, but UNAMID is here to assist in the implementation of a peace agreement. This is our challenge."

¶7. (SBU) As Darfur approaches the rainy season, UNAMID will face increased difficulties in deploying its assets amid conditions that limit mobility. Short on both logistical assets and engineering resources, UNAMID struggles to "make do," but key contributions to the functioning of the operation remain unpledged. UNAMID leadership said they did not foresee these needed donor contributions as

forthcoming. Asked by the delegation if UNAMID felt the current deployment levels could meet the needs of Darfur, Colonel Noddy Stafford, the UK Chief of J5 plans for the peacekeeping force, said the numbers are currently sufficient, but UNAMID's mandate must be interpreted more robustly if Darfuris are going to feel the protective impact of the force. "There are opportunities to be robust, and our mandate gives us sufficient latitude to lead in situations that require our involvement," Stafford said. JSR Adada added that even at full deployment, UNAMID would still not have key aviation assets needed to help the hybrid force in monitoring an eventual ceasefire, as well as in overcoming the immense challenges presented by the sheer size of Darfur.

COMMENT

-----

18. (SBU) Codel Isakson is the third high-level U.S. delegation to visit Darfur in the last two months, following those by Codel Kerry and Special Envoy Gration. Darfuris, from the most empowered NCP hardliners to the most marginalized IDPs, enthusiastically welcomed Codel Isakson's day-long visit to the troubled region. Pressure from the Wali for visitors to meet only with NCP-approved Darfuris appears to have lessened, and the presence of a UNAMID Formed Police Unity accompanying the delegation resulted in a reduction of the overbearing GOS security presence that usually accompanies high-level foreign visitors in El Fasher. The scope of the visit, which included meetings with critics of the GoS, would have been impossible a year ago. It demonstrates that diplomacy and engagement with the NCP regime can pay subtle and unpredictable rewards. The GOS is showing signs that it will encourage similar delegations in the near future, while simultaneously showing restraint and avoiding civilian casualties in response to this week's JEM attacks against its Sudanese Armed Forces in western North Darfur (ref D). Although we doubt there has been any long-term change in GoS policy toward IDPs in Darfur, at least for the moment, it is on relatively good behavior by the standards of this regime. End comment.

ASQUINO